

**Abstract ID :** 427

**Title :** Seasonal and daily patterns of terrestrial habitat use by the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*)

**Category :** Ecology

**Student :** Not Applicable

**Preferred Format :** Oral Presentation

**Abstract :** A long-term study was conducted in order to monitor terrestrial habitat use by monk seals (*Monachus monachus*) in the National Marine Park of Alonnisos, N. Sporades, Greece. We used a combination of two study methods in order to record seal presence: a) visits to the seals hauling out sites (sea caves) and b) use of automatic programmable photographic cameras that take pictures at set 2 hrs time intervals. During the study period (summer 1990 - spring 2002) a total of 3395 visits were conducted to 40 different caves. In 465 cases (13,6%) a number of 885 seal observations were recorded. In addition, a total of 4231 photographic frames were obtained from cameras installed in 10 different caves. In 395 frames (11,4%) a number of 613 seal observations were recorded. In 762 frames, of these with no seal presence, unfavorable sea conditions (the beach of the cave was washed out by the waves) were recorded. In examining the seasonal distribution on habitat use, in terms of the number of animals recorded per direct observation, a significant difference was found between the months of the year with a distinct peak in the fall and winter months. Age categories and the sex of adults had the greatest effect on the seasonal pattern of the habitat use observed. Similar patterns of distinct seasonality on habitat use were found, when we examined the number of animals recorded through the automatic cameras. With respect to the daily pattern of habitat use, animals were recorded hauling-out throughout all hours of the day, but with significantly higher frequencies during the night. Differences were also found in the daily patterns of habitat use between the adult and the immature segment of the population.